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ABSTRACT

The relationship between organizational theory and the development of the human curriculum needs further assessment. The author suggests that Management by Objectives (MBO) can further the goals of human curriculum by altering the modes of organizational communication. (Author/DS)

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Re-evaluating the Human Curriculum: The Change From Bureaucratic to Professional

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Abstract

Recent attention has been given to the role of dialogue and organizational theory as they pertain to the development of the human curriculum (Beatty, 1976). Although the former has been discussed adequately, the latter needs further assessment. More specifically, an assessment of how the ideas related to organizational theory can be practically implemented in school systems is needed. Thus, the purpose of this essay is to advance a method or approach that educators may implement in their schools and to discuss the implications of this method for the further development of the human curriculum.

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EA 009 130

Recently, both the role of dialogue and organizational theory have been addressed in an attempt to re-evaluate the human curriculum (Beatty, 1976). Although the distinctions between dialogic and monologic communicators in an organization and the primary attitude changes needed to become dialogic, rather than monologic communicators were discussed adequately throughout the essay, the concept of organizational theory in the human curriculum still needs further assessment. More specifically, so that educators can recognize the actual organizational transition from bureaucratic to professional, the ideas posited in the essay with regard to Theory X and Theory Y, Likert's System, and Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid must be considered in terms of their practical implementation in school systems. To accomplish this, it is the purpose of this essay to 1) discuss the practical implementation of these ideas by addressing Management by Objectives (MBO), a method or approach which adequately encompasses the ideas related to both the role of dialogue and the organizational theories cited previously and 2) discuss the implications for further development of the human curriculum.

Management by Objectives (MBO)

MBO is both a philosophy and a method or approach. It is a philosophy which is not only comparable to the assumptions of the organizational theories cited previously, but also depicts a similar concern for both the people and production in the organization (e.g. the school). The underlying assumption of this philosophy is that people respond better to short-term objectives,

objectives which they help identify, and measures of these objectives, rather than objectives which are long-term, vague, or set by others (Sanford, 1973). As a method or an approach, it is used by both superiors and subordinates in the organization (e.g. the school) to identify common goals, determine objectives, and attain measured results for those goals and objectives. It is these measured results which provide an assessment for each organized unit and each individual in the organization (Ordiorne, 1965). To better understand the actual process associated with MBO and the responsibility of both the superior and the subordinate, the actual steps involved in MBO will be considered.

First, the MBO approach is initiated at the top part of the hierarchy with superiors and subordinates and continues down sequentially throughout the organization. Second, performance output areas, objectives for those areas, and measures of these objectives must be determined by these superiors and subordinates (Reddin, 1971). To accomplish these tasks, Reddin (1971) suggests that the following questions be considered by both the superior and the subordinate:

1. What is the position's unique contribution?
2. Is the position needed at all?
3. What would happen if the position were eliminated?
4. What can be most easily improved?
5. What can I do, if I am very effective in this position?

Once these questions are answered specifically, then the necessary performance output areas can be derived. Third, these perfor-

mance output areas must have specific quantity dimensions, time constraints, and time-ordered priorities (Schleh, 1961). This enables the superiors and subordinates to convert abstract objectives into appropriate and high priority activities. The following example, although it is a very simplified version, provides further insights with respect to this idea.

Objective: Change three traditional classrooms at the second, third, and fourth grade level to open classrooms by the end of two years to provide an opportunity to develop the human curriculum.

Activities: Analyze and determine the present status of each classroom at the second, third, and fourth grade level which is to undergo a change from a traditional classroom to an open classroom. Analyze and determine the necessary components of an open classroom. Implement the necessary changes to make the transition from the traditional to open classroom.

Thus, once the superiors and subordinates have agreed upon the major goal (e.g. the change from traditional to open classrooms), a specific number of classrooms undergoing the change is designated, and time constraints are determined. It should be noted at this point, that the determination of <u>all</u> the necessary components of open classrooms and implementation of those components to bring about the desired change is dependent on the particular school system and its present status in relation to the objective. Thus, superiors and subordinates would specify additional objectives and activities for the areas related to components of

open classrooms and the necessary changes and measures for those objectives. In essence, to accomplish the desired change, the superiors and subordinates must engage in a three-part process. More specifically, the steps entailed in that process are (Sanford, 1973):

1. Superiors and subordinates review mutually the performances for the subordinates toward the agreed-upon goals.
2. Superiors and subordinates agree mutually on the specific objectives with reference to the agreed-upon goals.
3. Superiors and subordinates agree mutually on the objectives which are related directly to the philosophy and goals of the organization.

Additionally, throughout this prccess, periodic assessment and overall evaluation sessions are also needed to provide the members with measures or performance outputs of the specified objectives and activities. Given this context, it is apparent that MBO may entail a behavioral change (Ordiorne, 1965). Moreover, since MBO may entail a behavioral change on the part of subordinates and superiors, several prerequisites, necessary for the effectiveness and success of the MBO process, must not only be recognized but also be implemented. More specifically, these prerequisites are decentralization of authority, high level support from management (e.g. administration), and clearly defined and measurable objectives set up by superiors and subordinates. Thus, MBO has to generate 1) a high degree of commitment from managers (e.g. administration) 2) vertical and horizontal integration of specified objectives throughout the organi-

zation (e.g. elimination of hierarchial or power positions in decision-making processes), and 3) integration of MBO with other management practices (e.g. ultimately, MBO should be used as a method for changing the entire organization, the school, not just a part of that organization) if it is to be effective (Sanford, 1973). It is the fulfillment of this criteria which can guarantee mutual objective setting and performance review processes necessary for the success of MBO.

Implications of MBO for Further Development of the Human Curriculum

Although the entire MBO method or approach has been addressed on a more simplistic rather than detailed level, the implications for further development of the human curriculum can readily be assessed. For example, there are several factors which support this contention. Some of these factors are:

1. The MBO method has a "motivational effect on subordinates based on the participatory nature of the process, thus involving the subordinates" (Sanford). Given this context, the MBO method can insure the organizational transition from bureaucratic to professional. Similarly, the concept of dialogic communication in the organization, referred to earlier, is no longer a dysfunctional idea, given the type of communicative setting. Thus, at each level in the organization the potential of each individual can be released by this type of communication and interaction(Beatty, in press). Only then can the members truly focus their efforts on humanizing the curriculum, for the organizational transition from bureaucratic to professional will have occurred. Similarly, the human curriculum may not only

evolve but also be maintained in the latter type of organization.

2. The MBO method focuses on specific results in terms of outputs (Schleh, 1961). "Stated another way, MBO concentrates on what should be and actually is achieved rather than on ways in which things should be achieved" (Sanford, 1973). Similarly, the extent to which the curriculum is going to be and is humanized has to be determined at some point, rather than just discussed. Thus, humanizing the curriculum becomes not only a philosophy, but also a method. Similarly, the outputs which are achieved in relation to its development must be noted.

3. The MBO method promotes better communication and understanding among superiors and subordinates in the organization (e.g. the school) by providing a systematic framework for them. "The fact that superiors and subordinates meet, discuss consciously, and come to some agreement formally concerning the nature of the jobs of the subordinates and the specific results to be achieved goes a long way toward developing better superior-subordinate communication and understanding" (Sanford). Moreover, research investigations of perception differences of superiors and subordinates concerning the latter's goals rarely indicates substantial agreement between the two (Stern, 1958). Given these findings, the need for a method to allow the transition from bureaucratic to professional becomes even more importnat. Likewise, the opportunity to achieve the ultimate or most effective human curriculum can logically follow, given an organization which becomes primarily professional, rather than bureaucratic.

Although these factors and others not explicated in this essay

support further development of the human curriculum, the limitations of an approach or method like MBO must also be acknowledged. As indicated previously, there are many complex issues related to the actual development of the human curriculum which should not be minimized (Beatty, 1976). Realistically, to address the complexity of these issues is a time consuming matter. Similarly, the MBO approach is not based on its short-term usage, but rather its careful installation and implementation over an extended amount of time. Thus, educators must acknowledge that MBO, although effective, will not provide sudden or easy changes in their organization.

Like many educational concerns that educators are confronted with, the actual development of the human curriculum poses seemingly unending and unanswered questions. However, the need to do more than philosophize about our concerns has become increasingly apparent in education. Thus, to develop the human curriculum, educators' efforts will not only involve developing a philosophy, but also a method to implement that philosophy. More importantly, a method is needed to assess the actual development of the human curriculum. Certainly, the involvement of the majority of educators in a given school system is necessary if the human curriculum is to become a reality. More importantly, the survival and continuation of the human curriculum are dependent on several, not a few educators. Given these contentions, the MBO method can provide both the beginning and continuation of that reality.

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